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The Photodrama as a Literary Force.

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Bibliography.

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and  
Arthur Leeds.
- "The Development of the Drama".....Brander Mathews.
- "The Essentials of Aesthetics"..George Lansing Raymond.
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- "Enjoyment of Poetry".....Max Eastman.



Primarily, the photodrama is literature ; but it is more. It is a composite of all the esthetic arts : music, architecture, painting, sculpture, and poetry. It is the result of the progressive character of art, the humanizing of nature. Art is "the exact expression of the social and mental conditions of the times which produced it; its end the interpretation of the soul of man. The same passions, sorrows, doubts, fears, and aspirations elevate or submerge it the world over. Because this is true, the Cinema film, which is easily circulated and is perceived, not through the complex language of one nation, but through gestures common to all, is destined to be the leading constructive influence for world-wide uplift and culture.

It is the duty of the public to reject that which is not moral and true art, and of the photo-playwright and producer to bring forth that which is. As a result of the recognition of this duty, The National Board of Censorship passes upon all films released in America, the birthplace of the industry. Some of the results we shall note under the third point. It will, further, be the aim of this paper to consider (1) the nature of the plot of the photodrama and the movement, the plot which the drama has brought to it, and the photodrama's probable reaction upon the plot of both the future drama and the novel ; (2) the esthetic phase of the subject ; (4) the great literature of the past the photodrama has brought before the



public ; finally, (5) to limit the application of the term to literature.

"Literature is the artistic record of life." It aims to make us understand one another better. But man made himself understand long before he contrived a systematic language and this was the beginning of pantomime. The Greek drama grew out of the ballad-dance. The dithyramb, a form involved in the worship of Dionysus, was developed into the chorus in tragedy by Arion. "Trag" means, literally, "satyr" (the singers wore goat-skins to represent satyrs); "edy", "ode", a form of lyric poetry. From this song of the satyrs tragedy reached its height of development in the hands of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, bound to a certain form limited in time and space. It was built upon the most dramatic incident in an episode - the narrative being left to the epic - and must not cover more than twenty-four hours. The scene seldom changed, though in the Eumenides it shifts from Argos to the temple of Apollo at Delphi, then to Athens. If more were to be told, a new drama was written, as shown by the trilogy of Aeschylus : "Agamemnon", "Sepulchral Rites", and the "Eumenides". These larger units are peculiarly adapted to the Silent-drama, not because they developed its essential elements ; rapid scene shifting and quick action, but because the plots are strong and involve big ideas. They are not caged in by stage mechanism.

Pantomime did not develop contiguously with the Greek drama, but rather gave way to the oriental and Greek pageant, to be revived in Rome by the Church long after it had frowned down Greek art. As early as the time of Nero it began its influence on the



drama. The Pantaloon, Harlequin, Zanis, or domestic servant, and Columbine, or country wench, are characteristic of Italian development. Harlequin comes from the legend of the Harlekin-folk and developed into comic demons, eventually furnishing the Hell-mouth to the religious drama or Miracle plays and allegorical characters to the Morality plays. The serious Italian literature rejected these stock characters, but Comedy accepted and carried them into vaudeville, producing among others the modern clown. But it has also given us one of the most pleasing and finest of all character portrayals, the fool of Shakespeare. In the last few years the pantomime has been revived, together with pageantry, under the impetus of aesthetic dancing. Thus far had it developed when the cinemograph came into the hands of the producer. His new profession appealed to him not as an art but as a mere means of making money. The vaudeville was drawing the crowd. It was natural, therefore, that he should reach out for the comic character and develop a slapstick burlesque type of motion-picture comedy. But the production grew by leaps and bounds, resulting in a raised standard for both the cinema and the vaudeville.

The public demanded a coherent, unified story with a strong motive stimulating to action - legitimate plot. Another class was added to literature, the Scenario. This is narrative in type, but makes special demands on the author. It is divided into four parts : (1) Synopsis ; (2) Cast of characters ; (3) Scenario proper ; (4) Scene plot. The synopsis contains the story in a nutshell. It demands a good vocabulary, that every word count and carry suggestion ; movement harmonious, dynamic, and plausible ; every situation explainable



and explained ; that the whole be considerate of 1000 feet of film or a multiple thereof ; that there be presented a logical, live,worth-while plot in which the "elements of action and setting are paramount and the element of character subsidiary". Many of the characters introduced are,generally,but puppets,the background for the principal actors. Under "Cast of Characters" are enumerated the leading persons of the drama,delineated by two or three suitable adjectives.

The scenario proper sets forth clearly the scenes and scene action. No scene may be more than of five minutes length. The same setting may be used for several scenes - once shifted and shifted back again,three scenes result. All inserts,i.e. leaders, subtitles,letters,telegrams,etc.,will be inserted in the scenes respectively to which they belong,"business" left to the stage-manager, although appropriate character interpretation is fitting. The whole forms a continuous chain of incidents as they happen in life.

The scene plot is comparatively a detail,simply showing the sequence of the scenes and their settings.

Many professional terms will naturally be adopted by the scenario writer,probably many new terms which are not. What is the possible result of this? In so far as it is based on human interest and sympathy,a plot is a plot whether it be developed for a photo-play,a drama,or a novel. The photo-play writers are,in rapidly increasing numbers,taking out fiction rights. Is it not likely to follow that these terms of the photo-play will creep into the novel and the drama together with something of the terseness of style? Is it not probable,too,that the coming novelist will



merely suggest much to be interpreted in terms of the reader's experience? A single word will serve for the chain of adjectives of an earlier day.

Many of these new words will become a working part of the English language. Eastman mentions two classes of words for which we are always seeking, "those which fill a vacancy and those which may be used as synonyms". In the past many good scenarios have been weakened by slang phrases. This tendency will be eradicated as the form takes its place in literature. The material has improved; why should not the language? An Englishman recently published a radical complaint against the alleged spread of American slang throughout the Empire by the film distributing stations, their inserts, etc., as flashed on the screen.

But the good things of life are always more or less mixed with the bad, and it is well to think, too, of the choice lines of literature vividly impressed on the minds of the multitude by the same device. May not this create a more nearly universal demand for clean, wholesome books and force the writer to approach his audience from the democratic point of view, giving it not the story of a class, but of individual experiences? "Molly Make-believe" is within the comprehension of all, young or old, rich or poor, for it deals with the little things which make up the sum total of life. Innocent, happy love-stories are scarce. They go with the life of the past generation. Institutions become more numerous and life becomes more strenuous. The films which thrilled and awed the average audience before the war have lost their charm. The senses



are dulled by over-stimulating from reports of daily recurring tragedies. It takes the great patriotic revival of our nation's wars, the battles intensified by the clash and thunder of an orchestra, to arouse emotional response to-day.

The cinema has invaded practically all the army camps and is furnishing instruction and relaxation to millions of French, German, English and Indian soldiers. The Indians are most interested in the new field it is opening before them. The soldier and servant classes of that land have no progressive literature. Their stories have been handed down for generations. A demand is being created. Such a demand is generally satisfied. The result will carry to other lands the atmosphere of the orient.

Thoughtful literature-loving people the world over are expressing a plea for a purer and more truly literary style of scenario writing. It is not improbable that as the art receives wider recognition and brings to light its geniuses, scenario specimens will be produced of as great literary value in their way as many of the closet dramas of the past. Doubtless, their right to live will depend largely on plot.

The nature of the plot is determined by the choice of subject-matter, the needs of mechanism and art of cinematography. The subject-matter of drama as well as photodrama is the "action and reaction of the human will", the conflict of right and wrong, the warring of inner forces of man with outer. They differ in that the drama emphasizes the subjective, the photodrama the objective side of human events. A plot suitable for motion-pictures



will most likely be suitable for the novel, but not necessarily for the drama.

Some plots are not adapted to visualization ; as a rule, the romantic tragedy is not, since in this great stress is laid on character development. Many plots might be mechanically possible but could not reveal the story through action. Those with an uncertain ending are distasteful. When reading a story or drama the individual recalls and constructs images stimulated by the printed page. It is essentially a mental process as opposed to a sensory aroused by the screen presentation. In the first instance, imagination easily furnishes a satisfactory ending, but does not in the second.

As a piece of literature and a moral agency, Ibsen's "Ghosts" ranks high, but proved its unfitness for the photoplay. The concise framework of "Hedda Gabler" would dwindle down to a few hundred feet of film. Only words could do the psychological development of Hedda's character justice. When you think of "Brand", in its magnitude, it would seem to be suitable, but has it not too indefinite an ending and does it not too much depend on character development? "Rosmersholm" is intensely dramatic, but its force lies in the slow, calm, intense movement. "Pillars of Society" is an alleged success. The sociological problem of capital and labor, as discussed in the play, is made clear. Yet it has become noticeably Americanized. The first act of this drama is not strong. It is given over almost entirely to gossip. It lacks dramatic action. Yet the material set forth by the gossipers became intensely strong and dramatic in



the hands of the scenario writer and remains so throughout. Massing of character in the last scenes on the screen differs slightly from Ibsen's units of action and of entries and exits of characters, leaving two or three to converse until the appearance of the crowd - very much as Ibsen suggests in his stage directions. From that point the action follows closely the text and the audience truly feels "the spirits of Truth and Freedom - these are the pillars of society".

"An Enemy of the People" might prove equally satisfactory.

"Emperor and Galilean", though a closet drama, should, with suitable changes in one or two of the scenes, make a successful photoplay - the two in one. It is great in distribution of power. It is great and universal in subject. Great crowds could be used, and great battle scenes staged.

What of Dickens? English speaking peoples are pretty generally familiar with his books. They praise his descriptions, his homely scenes, his household remedies - and above all, a Micawber, a Little Nell, a Pecksniff. They are to be found the world over. But the motion drama is not built on character. The setting is depressing when separated from Dickens' power of description. The result is not very different from many films which trace their germ plot to the slums.

Yeats' "Land of Heart's Desire" is a play delightful to read. The plot, lacking decidedly in force, presents nothing tangible to the average audience, being a happy flight of fancy suggested by



the folk-lore of Ireland, the simple Irish customs which seek the good will of the people supposed to frequent the hearths in the night time. Similarly ineffective as a screen production would be Mauritian's "The Sunken Bell".

If you will act upon the suggestion of Brian Hooker, of Columbia University, you will find many similarities between the peculiar technique of Shakespeare and that of the photodrama. Perhaps no writer either of the past or of the present has given us work so admirably adapted to screen portrayal. Shakespeare did not depend on the cumbersome scenery, the calcium light, or rapid costume change of the modern stage, but solely upon the descriptive passages as a spur to the imaginations of his audience for setting, or resorted to nature. He followed the primal idea: (1) thought, (2) action, (3) speech.

Is this not why the Ben Greet company is so successful in presenting the Shakespearean drama? The photoplay can, as the spoken drama cannot, afford appropriately to set up numerous scenes the one time required.

Shakespeare recognized two kinds of time, fast and slow, the one applying to the stage, the other to life. The time of "As You Like It" is ten days from the stage point of view, but the lines of the play show the passage of years.

"Now, my co-mates and brothers in exile,

Hath not old custom made this life more sweet

Than painted pomp?"

Again, the duke speaks of the "seasons' differences". The cinema uses the insert or the fade-in or the fade-out to account for the



apparent discrepancies.

Battle scenes, too large for ordinary staging, pervade many of his plays. Mr. Hooker mentions the "cut back" as originating with Shakespeare. Turn to the last act of "Macbeth". Eight scenes occur, the longest containing seventy-eight lines alternating between the exterior and interior scenes at the palace at Dunsinane and the various parts of the battle-field in Birnam Wood.

The fairy fantasies of "Midsummer Night's Dream" and "The Tempest", and the ghosts of "Hamlet" and "Julius Caesar" bring to mind marvelous possibilities in the use of mirrors to portray shadows. Sir Herbert Tree, the English actor, has been instrumental in placing before the cinema audience many of Shakespeare's plays. He declares "Richard II" especially adapted because of the "pageantry" of the various incidents.

The complex plot, a main plot and one or more sub-plots ensuing in rapid action, has been recognized by scenario writers as valuable. Its model is to be found in "King Lear". Lear's Passion and Gloucester's Weakness run parallel. Great liberty has been taken with this form by the scenario writer of "Intolerance". Four distinct plots are bound together only by the theme, intolerance, and its influence in various ages. The modern story forming the main plot is complete in itself and adaptable for a one-reel feature. Plots two, three, and four, are dependent on one for their force. The second delineates the struggle of the French Huguenots and the intolerance of the age toward them; the third, the Jewish intolerance



...and the Christ; and the fourth, intolerance in the time of Nebuchadnezzar. This is illustrative, also, of the present tendency to make world-wide plots, for which there are, probably, two reasons: the film, once released, is distributed the world over; and the ideal of world citizenship is growing.

"War Bride", one of the most recent films, depends for its force, not on its plot, which is weak, nor on its spectacular display, but rather on the influence of the war sentiment which is gripping people throughout the country, and the wonderful emotional acting of Nazimova.

The very spectacular fantasy, "A Daughter of the Gods", advertised as the only million dollar picture, was written to display Annette Kellerman's physique. Its plot is based partially upon the story of the most beautiful sultana Noormahal, in whose memory her husband, Shah Jehan, erected the Taj Mahal. With this oriental motif are combined others from Greek mythology. Though the theme is not so strong as that of "Intolerance", the main plots and the sub-plots are more closely interwoven.

Gabrielle d'Annunzio, the first great dramatist to turn his attention to the photodrama, brought his varied experience in the field of verse, religious, spectacular, and historical drama and romantic fiction to the new art, producing the masterpiece, "Caberia". Whether this work of d'Annunzio can justly claim the right to long life is another question. Perhaps the world will look back and say of him as it does of the pioneer novelists, Fielding and Richardson, in the words of Ibsen's "Maximus the Mystic": "Had the age been



greater, you would have been less."

The captivity of the Roman child, Caberia (Ellisa), her rescue, and love, constitute the main plot; the love of Sorhonisba, daughter of Hasdrubal, for a Numidian Prince, constitutes the under-plot. Both are enveloped in the Punic Wars. The story of the under-plot is taken literally from Livy's "History of Rome."

The wine seller, shadow of the harlequin, brings comedy to mingle with tragedy and romance. Hannibal, crossing the Alps, gives to the play a familiar appeal. The result, all told, is a vital resurrection of the Rome and Carthage of three hundred years before the Christian era.

On the high battlement of Syracuse stands the solitary figure of Archimedes, symbolic of the science of the past, surveying the great Roman fleet below. At the left stands the latest product of his knowledge, a machine-like construction of revolving mirrors, formidable in their massiveness. This constitutes setting. Add movement, and the old legend of Archimedes burning the Roman fleet by means of the concentrated rays of the sun is told without words. It is a unit in itself, yet vitally linked up with the whole to give complex harmony, an essential of beauty. Spectacular it is in a sense, but there is a dignity about it approaching the grand in art.

The *Odyssey*, in its last production, exemplifies the truly grand. Perspective was early used effectively, in a cheap production, in the incident of the Cyclops. The scene in which Ulysses and



his men took flight was all shown in the distance, the human beings not farther away than the immortals. The appearance in size seemed logical through the medium of distance. When the same idea was carried out regardless of perspective, the effect was hauntingly distasteful. For example, the men imprisoned in the cave appeared as pygmies grouped about a very corpulent human being. It reminded one of childish fancies of Jack the Giant-killer, and the giant.

The same inconsistencies appeared in handling the entrances of the deities. Athena rose upon the sands of Ithaca, a magnified shadow of her statue before the Parthenon, completely out of proportion with the landscape. The producers could not yet cope with the supernatural, but gave an added charm to the purely human.

A beautifully simple scene occurs in the Phaeacian Wonderland, when the king's daughter and her followers are discovered. It carries over a charm to lines in the Iliad :

"Each gushing fount a marble cistern fills  
Whose polished bed receives the falling rills,  
Where Trojan dames, ere yet alarmed by Greece,  
Washed their fair garments in the days of peace."

Just as pleasing are the home scenes in Odysseus' absence, the revelry of the suitors alternating with Penelope at her loom tirelessly weaving what she would spend the night in unraveling out. The moonlit garden scene of lovers is in its details extraneous material. The lighting is beautiful, but the dramatic interpretation - rank.



Great products do not spring up over night and such failures as these serve as stepping-stones to the recognition of the true floating oral literature style, growing out of the fact that the material in a consecutive chain of incidents, furnishing those of deeper insight to a truly beautiful production.

Perspective has achieved marvelous results in many of the recent plays. In "Silks and Satins" Marguerite Clark dances through a long rose arbor out into the forest and to a brief freedom from the conventionalities which beset the rich, and is seen on a distant hill.

Again, the death of Flora Cameron in "The Birth of a Nation" achieves its end only through perspective. The act is subordinated to its significance. "The Dumb Girl of Portici" serves best to show the influence of both perspective and esthetic dancing on setting.

How does it happen that Kipling's "Without Benefit of Clergy" has not been adapted? Where can be found a better opportunity to produce a film characterized by simplicity? It serves as a good illustration of contrast. There is the simple trusting Indian girl; the sordid, crafty mother; and the typical Englishman of the East.

It is the spell of the East which wipes out centuries of heredity, carrying Holden back to paganism when his father-love yields to the plea of PirKhan, the old watchman, and offers the lamb



he presents, the birth sacrifice - "life for life, blood for blood".

Though there are only a few characters, life and movement are plentiful and those moments to which Brander Matthews refers when speaking of a great actor : " He recognizes that there are moments in life when silence may be more eloquent than the silver sentences of any soliloquy, - that emotion is often inarticulate when it is keener ; but, also, that a mental struggle at the very crisis of a story can often be made intelligible by visible acts ; and he knows that spectators are far more interested in what is done on the stage than in what is said."

The scenes are varied and short, street scenes, home scenes, military pomp - that always takes with an audience - and all the gaiety of the men's club.

But most beautiful is the love scene in the moonlit garden overlooking the lights of the city, the delightful little girl mother bedecked in all the jewels she loved best. From shoulder to elbow, and elbow to wrist, run bracelets of silver and gold. We have but to think of the applause which greeted "Less Than Dust" to know that this sort of thing appeals.

The end is pathetic, almost tragic. The anguish and desolation of the man's heart is repeated in every line of the last scene. The rains brought destruction. "A grey squirrel was in possession of the veranda as if the house had been untenanted for thirty years." The greed of the old mother added sordidness to desolation.



Little wonder that a single art so completely including  
all other arts has evolved!

The artist must first have something worth while to  
give out. Upon the nature of the idea will the form of its pre-  
sentation depend, though significance embodied in one form may sug-  
gest its embodiment in another. The Satyr of the Capitol, sculp-  
tured by Praxiteles, gives us Hawthorne's "Marble Faun"; the statue  
of Galatea, the drama "Pygmalion and Galatea"; the Laocoon group,  
Lessing's "Laocoon"; and the little Indian love lyric, the photoplay,  
"Less Than Dust".

Not only the productions, but the surroundings in which  
they are presented, are considered. In the most progressive thea-  
tres a curtain rises as for the "legitimate" drama. The stage is  
hung with deep red velvet. The center is held by the films.  
Curtains to the left are drawn aside disclosing a shimmering moon-  
lit sea. To the right, sunlight and shadow of a woodland. An  
orchestra accompanies the presentation of the pictures with arias  
from the operas or symphony program music.

Why do so many of the problem plays screened fall short  
of accomplishing their aim? They are almost always built upon the  
motive, guilt and retribution, in one phase or another, one of the big  
motives of tragedy. The presentation is not, however, in keeping  
with the motive from the artistic point of view. According to  
Aristotle, "Tragedy deals with serious, complete action of certain  
magnitude, (dramatic, not narrative, form) purging the soul through  
the emotions of pity and fear." Is this not really the aim of



these plays?

Again, tragedy presents that which lifts the individual above the self and is not directly applicable to the self. It presents greatness : greatness in possibilities, greatness in power, greatness in extent, universal application of the idea. Is this true of most of the plays of this type? It is true that the idea is universal, but it is not so conveyed. The form is purely narrative. It is realistic. It is imitative. But it is not representative.

The seriously dramatic in literature is not always tragedy, but it is sublime and maintains an equilibrium between the "conscious and subconscious intellection". Of this nature is the legitimate drama, "The Passing of the Third Floor Back". It is representative, broad in its application. Principality and subordination are observed in the leading character, impersonated by Forbes-Robertson, this character embodying the spirit of Christianity. The slow dramatic progress of the character in his influence, and his silent departure into the morning, allowing the dawning sunlight to stream into the souls of those he leaves, recognizes a complete moving image conveying a big idea direct to the minds of the audience, as opposed to emotional suggestion.

It must be remembered that on the attitude of the reader toward his book, on the attitude of the spectator toward the play, depends the moral, esthetic, or scholastic value to the individual. Mrs. Browning presents this thought in "Aurora Leigh" :

"We get no good



By being ungenerous, even to a book,  
And calculating profits, - so much help  
By so much reading. It is rather when  
We gloriously forget ourselves and plunge  
Soul forward, headlong into a book's profound,  
Impassioned for its beauty and salt of truth, -  
'Tis then we get the right good from a book."

Many novels classed among the great works of literature  
are at a hopeless disadvantage when deprived of the word medium  
and thrown upon the screen. "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde", by Robert  
Louis Stevenson, a book which when placed in the hands of the un-  
thinking easily becomes merely sensational trash, is strongly crit-  
icised by certain mothers as entirely unfit for their sons to read.  
But let this same book be read by one who reads beyond the mere  
word interpretation, as Dr. Stanchfield interprets it in his lecture  
entitled, "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde", and it becomes  
a mighty lesson on the insidious growth of habit.

If screened, probably three-fourths of the audience would  
see merely a sensational bit of melodrama, and unless it had been  
portrayed by a discriminating actor it would, not improbably, be con-  
demned by the board of censorship.

It is not only the sordidly suggestive which may result  
in harm. "Little Miss George Washington" is clean and clever.  
It is the story of the pranks of two boarding-school girls. One,  
the ring-leader in mischief, awarded the medal for truthfulness,  
utilizes her reputation to get herself and others out of scrapes.



In this way, deception is made not only attractive but useful in extricating one's self from high school difficulties and the like. Adventure proverbially appeals to the sixteen-year old. The suggestion might well be acted upon. Here the national board of censorship has no influence.

The censors restrict merely the sensational and unnecessary portrayal of evil. Crime and immorality when screened to present a moral lesson, are passed with the restriction that their presentation shall not be understandable to children. Nor is it allowable to furnish an incentive to criminal action.

The need that the board of censors should consider school children is evident from the recent investigation in Portland by a board comprised of Reed College students and business men. Out of 2647 children questioned regarding their attendance at the Cinema :

9.5% did not attend.

28.4% attended twice a week.

5.6% attended three times a week.

In the schools lies the opportunity to develop a taste for the best. There should be organized a positive force for good plays rather than to depend entirely on a negative force.

Novels and newspapers present crime less harmfully than photoplays. In the picture the image as a whole is perceived. From the printed page the individual must construct the image. He will be able to supply to it only those elements which have previously been perceived.



The moral effect of "Huckleberry Finn" would be very bad and yet it is a boy's book and a good one. Many dramas would degenerate "Kindling", "The High Road", "Together", "The Web of Life". Many Elizabethan plays are more crude in expression than in plot. "The Duchess of Malfi", however, and "A Maid's Tragedy" are impossible. The latter depends almost entirely on beauty of language and the many little lyrics contained.

Nevertheless, the cinema is destined to become one of the greatest powers for generating a broad appreciative understanding of literary masterpieces. It will not eventually draw from the legitimate drama and novel, but will create a greater demand for the best each can give. An attempt will here be made to sum up a few of the varied types of the literary achievements of the past which have been filmed.

Little mention has heretofore been made of the relation of the photodrama to poetry. Probably the extensive circulation of Dante's "Inferno" has been its greatest achievement in this line. But certainly the poetic imagination which saw in : -

"Long lines of cliff breaking have left a chasm  
And in the chasm are foam and yellow sands;  
Beyond, red roofs about a narrow wharf  
In cluster ; then a molder'd church and higher  
Along street climbs to one tall-towered mill ;  
And high in heaven behind it a gray down  
With Danish barrows ; and a hazel-wood  
By autumn nutters haunted, flourishes  
Green in a cuplike hollow of the down." -



the setting for the film, "Enoch Arden", the adaptation of the story of love and sacrifice as set forth by Tennyson; and the early producer who dared to bring into pictures what he saw in "Pippa Passes", regardless of the pessimistic opinion of his contemporaries; together with the scenario writer of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" deserve much praise.

While "Camille" and "Green Elizabeth" kinetoscoped in their legitimate stage surrounding, with Sarah Bernhardt in the title role and an especially adapted phonograph giving the vocal and orchestral accompaniment to the instant with the action, has not proved a great success, it has opened a world of possibilities.

The "School for Scandal" and "Arizona", among the dramas, "The Spoilers", "Daddy Long Legs", and "Dawn of a To-morrow" among later fiction, "Quo Vadis" which fell far short of the original on the legitimate stage, "The Last Days of Pompeii", "Oliver Twist", and the seemingly impossible "Les Miserables" have been released. While the film probably does not do Hugo justice, those who would read the book have a greater incentive and the rest of the public has gained something.

"Pilgrim's Progress" and many Biblical stories are circulated. They, together with such plays as "Hypocrites", revive old legends and are of moral value. Children and all who have not forgotten how to enjoy childish fancies are led into the land of fairies by "Mother Goose" and ride in a wonderful coach with a real little Cinderella.

Tolstoi's "Kreutzer Sonata" has a complex effect. The



first feeling after the curtain falls and the nervous strain is relieved is disappointment. It appears to have become cheap melodrama. This is probably because the first scenes are stronger than the last. Theda Bara, impersonating the sister, occupies the center of the stage by her personality, not by the part she plays. An afterthought suggests the question: Why is it not much more melodramatic? The shooting scene is in part very similar to that in "Hedda Gabler". The two plays are apt to become closely associated. The problem is social and a big one. It is complex in that it applies to life in general, and more nearly to the conditions existing among the Russian Jews.

"Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea" reanimates Jules Verne's story, but its chief attraction lies in its adaptability to display the results of the new mechanical device to further submarine photography.

"The Birth of a Nation" soars above Dixon's "Clansman", which furnishes the material. It presents a just view of the reconstruction period in our country's history, as the high school texts do not, and stirs the patriotism in every American citizen. Only by recognizing our past mistakes can we hope to avoid such mistakes in the future.

There are some ideas which are much better left in the abstract. They lose in the concrete that element which makes them worth while. Kipling's "Vampire" is striking, but it is of this nature. The result is neither melodrama nor true tragedy. Whether its effect be harmful or good will be determined by the character of the individual spectator and his ability to differentiate and



to appreciate dramatic interpretation. The awe and horror put into it by Theda Bara's powerful impersonation of the vampire lifts the scene far above the sordid. For any theatre manager to run the film in the belief that it is an agent for moral uplift is justifiable ; but to run the film with sensational advertisement is criminal.

Public opinion is ever weeding out those pictures which do not measure up to the standard. The standard itself is dynamic.

An experienced musician says of the cinema : "Here, we are often called upon to play music used to make up symphony programs." Thus it may be seen that in the field of the photoplay the average mind is brought into contact with the best there is in music, in dramatic art, and in literature.